



Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement  
801 North First Street, Room 400  
San José, California 95110-1795

Hearing Date/Agenda Number:  
P.C. 5/20/02      Item:

File Number:  
GP01-05-02

Council District and SNI Area:  
5 – N/A

Major Thoroughfares Map Number:  
68

Assessor's Parcel Number(s):  
484-03-041, -042, -043, -044, -045, & -075

Project Manager: Lesley Xavier

## GENERAL PLAN REPORT

### 2002 Spring Hearing

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

General Plan amendment request to change the Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation from Medium High Density Residential (12-25 DU/AC) on 1 acre, Medium Density Residential (8-16 DU/AC) on 0.4 acres, and General Commercial on 0.3 acres to Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC) on 1.7 acres.

**LOCATION:** Northwest corner of Alum Rock Avenue and Alexander Avenue

**ACREAGE:** 1.7

#### APPLICANT/OWNER:

Staff/Various

#### GENERAL PLAN LAND USE / TRANSPORTATION DIAGRAM DESIGNATION:

Existing Designation: General Commercial, Medium High Density Residential (12-25 DU/AC), & Medium Density Residential (8-16 DU/AC) (Neighborhood Business District Overlay)

Proposed Designation: Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC) (Neighborhood Business District Overlay)

**EXISTING ZONING DISTRICT(S):** CN – Commercial Neighborhood, R-1-8 – Single-Family Residence District, A(PD) – Agriculture (Planned Development)

#### SURROUNDING LAND USES AND GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION(S):

North: Single-Family Residential – Medium Density Residential (8-16 DU/AC) & Medium High Density Residential (12-25 DU/AC)

South: Multi-Family Residential – Medium High Density Residential (12-25 DU/AC)

East: Cemetery & Single-Family Residential – Medium Density Residential (8-16 DU/AC) & General Commercial

West: Multi-Family Residential – Medium High Density Residential (12-25 DU/AC)

#### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS:

Housing Opportunity Study Phase II Environmental Impact Report (EIR) – Pending

#### PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC)

Approved by:

Date:

#### PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

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**CITY COUNCIL ACTION:**

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**CITY DEPARTMENT AND PUBLIC AGENCY COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

- City of San Jose Parks and Recreation Commission – This amendment and GP01-05-03, GP01-05-04, and GP01-05-05 are within ¾ mile of one another. These projects together would generate the need for an accumulated 3.4 acres of dedicated parkland to serve new residents of these projects. It is recommended that Planning staff work closely with PRNS Parks Planning staff to find suitable parkland either on project sites or off site in close proximity to the project site to serve future residents of these sites.
- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) – The site is located along the proposed alignment for the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project. VTA supports the proposed intensification, provided that any development project accomplishes the following: incorporates Transit Oriented Development features into the project and that it accommodates the light rail project design.

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**GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE:**

- None received.

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**ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:****PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This is a staff initiated General Plan amendment to change the Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation from Medium High Density Residential (12-25 DU/AC) on 1 acre, Medium Density Residential (8-16 DU/AC) on 0.4 acres, and General Commercial on 0.3 acres to Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC) on 1.7 acres located at the northwest corner of Alum Rock Avenue and Alexander Avenue. The proposed Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC) land use designation permits wholly higher density residential projects or a mixed-use type development where neighborhood serving commercial can be provided on the first two floors and residential units above. Freestanding neighborhood commercial buildings are permitted where the development is well integrated into the project and they are located along a pedestrian pathway. Assuming a density of 55 dwelling units per acre, the requested land use designation would allow for approximately 95 dwelling units on the subject site, which is an increase of approximately 72 dwelling units over the existing General Plan designation.

**BACKGROUND**

This staff-initiated General Plan Amendment is a result of the Phase II Housing Opportunity Study (HOS). The City Council deferred this amendment from the 2001 Annual Review to allow for completion of an Environmental Impact Report.

In January 2000, the City Council directed Planning staff to conduct the Housing Opportunity Study (HOS). The Housing Opportunity Study is modeled on the successful Housing Initiative Study that was completed for the Guadalupe Light Rail Transit Corridor in April 1991. The Housing Opportunity Study is a proactive approach to facilitate increased housing production, support transit with appropriate development intensities, and further the City's longstanding policy of infill development. The HOS seeks to identify specific vacant or underutilized parcels, particularly within or near Transit-Oriented Development Corridors, which would be suitable for higher density or mixed-use development. These Corridors include the Guadalupe, Stevens

Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos Street, Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue, Winchester Boulevard, Capitol Avenue/Expressway, and Vasona.

The HOS has three phases, with each phase evaluating different Transit Oriented Development Corridors. The first phase, which focused on the Capitol Avenue/Expressway Transit-Oriented Development Corridor, was completed in 2001. Phase II of the Housing Opportunity Study is focused on the Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos Street and Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue Transit-Oriented Development Corridors. This General Plan amendment is one of five proposed amendments on the Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue TOD Corridor. Phase III will focus on the five remaining Transit-Oriented Development Corridors and other primary transit routes to secure additional infill housing sites.

### Site and Surrounding Uses

The amendment site is located at the northwest corner of Alexander Avenue and Alum Rock Avenue. The site currently consists of two small commercial buildings, three single-family residences and a senior housing project, currently under construction. The senior housing development is located on the western 1-acre portion of the site and consists of 56 affordable senior apartments (File No. PD00-031). The proposed land use designation is consistent with the approved project. Uses surrounding the site include single-family and multi-family residential to the north, the Calvary Catholic Cemetery to the east, and multi-family residential to the south and to the west.



Looking at the northwest corner of Alum Rock Avenue and Alexander Avenue.



Looking towards the north at the southern boundary of the site along Alum Rock Avenue.

General Plan land uses surrounding the site include Medium Density Residential (8-16 DU/AC) to the north and to the east and Medium High Density Residential (12-25 DU/AC) to the south and to the west.

The amendment site is located within the Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Corridor, one of six TOD Corridors identified in the City's General Plan. The TOD Corridors are areas designated by the City as generally suitable for higher residential densities, more intensive non-residential uses, and mixed-use development. These corridors are centered along existing or planned light rail transit lines and/or major bus routes. The Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue TOD Corridor includes a planned light rail line (Downtown/East Valley Light Rail Project) that will link the Diridon Station west of Downtown to the Alum Rock Station on the Capitol Light Rail Transit (LRT) line. The planning of the Downtown/East Valley Light Rail Project is currently in the conceptual engineering and environmental review stages of the process. The project is anticipated to begin construction in 2004/2005 and be completed by 2007/2008.

The amendment site is also located within the Alum Rock Avenue Neighborhood Business District (NBD). The NBD functions as an "overlay" designation that is applied to predominantly commercial land use designations in areas where there are strip commercial or "main street" areas that function in their neighborhoods or communities as a business district. The area provides a focal point and identity for the

community. The Alum Rock Neighborhood Business District is a mix of commercial uses, predominantly commercial strip centers, but also “parking lots strips” where the parking is located in front of the buildings.

## **ANALYSIS**

The amendment site is located along the Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Corridor, which is the location of the planned Downtown/East Valley Light Rail Project. It is also located near the Highway 680 interchange. The site currently has three different land use designations associated with it on six parcels. Assembling the parcels together with one land use designation would make future development more feasible. The western portion of the site is also under construction with a high density senior housing development. Other multi-family developments are also located adjacent to site in the south, west, and the northwest. This sites proximity to transit and other multi-family developments makes it ideal for Transit-Oriented Development.

### **Policy Consistency**

The proposed land use change on the subject site is consistent with the General Plan’s Goals and Policies. Of particular importance is consistency with the residential land use policies. Residential Land Use Policy Number Three states,

- Higher residential densities should be distributed throughout the community. Locations near commercial and financial centers, employment centers, the light rail transit stations and along bus transit routes are preferable for higher density housing. There are a variety of strategies and policies in the General Plan that encourage the construction of high density housing and supportive mixed uses. For example, the Housing Initiative and Transit-Oriented Development Corridor Special Strategy Areas encourage high density housing and mixed use development in close proximity to existing and planned transit routes.

Residential Land Use Policy Number Nine states,

- When changes in residential densities are proposed, the City should consider such factors as neighborhood character and identity, compatibility of land uses and impacts on livability, impacts on services and facilities, including schools, to the extent permitted by law, accessibility to transit facilities, and impacts on traffic levels on both neighborhood streets and major thoroughfares.

The proposed change to Transit Corridor Residential is consistent with the above residential land use policies in that the subject site is located near commercial and employment centers and along a planned light rail transit line (Downtown/East Valley Light Rail Project). The proposed high density residential land use is compatible with the existing surrounding land uses and with the neighborhood character.

The proposed land use change is also consistent with the General Plan Balanced Community Goal, which states, “Develop a balanced and complete community in terms of land use distribution and densities, housing types and styles, economic development and job opportunities and opportunities for social and cultural expression.” The Transit Corridor Residential designation can provide a range of housing densities, which allows for different housing types, the option for retail commercial uses.

The proposed Transit Corridor Residential land use designation would promote and enhance the Neighborhood Business District (NBD) by the addition of new residents into the area and by providing the opportunity for additional ground floor commercial uses. The change in land use would also provide an opportunity to reinforce/redevelop the “main street” character along the Alum Rock corridor.

### **Land Use Compatibility**

The proposed change to the Land Use/Transportation Diagram from General Commercial to Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC) is compatible with surrounding land uses and consistent with the intent of the TOD Corridor. The proposed land use designation provides an opportunity to integrate uses and intensify land use in appropriate locations. Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC) allows wholly residential projects or projects with commercial uses at street level in conjunction with higher density uses on upper floors. Site specific densities, design, and uses would be determined at the zoning stage based on compatibility with surrounding land uses and conformance with General Plan policies. However, given the site’s location within the TOD Corridor and NBD, the future development would need to conform to both the underlying land use designation and the overlay designation. The two categories facilitate pedestrian-oriented development that includes a component of ground floor retail that maintains a street presence as well as a minimum of 20 dwelling units per acre.

### **Citywide Policy Issues**

The San Jose 2020 General Plan has seven Major Strategies that identify the principal objectives of the Plan. Of those seven, this amendment directly relates to three of them: Growth Management, Housing, and Sustainable City. The proposed amendment is supportive of the Growth Management Major Strategy that seeks to find the balance between the need to house new population and the need to balance the City’s budget, while providing acceptable levels of service. The amendment site is located within an area where urban facilities and services are already available; any infill development on this site supports the intent of the Growth Management Major Strategy. The proposed amendment is also supportive of the Housing Major Strategy that seeks to maximize the housing opportunities on infill parcels already served by the municipal services. A change in the land use designation to a higher density residential designation would allow for more housing units on this infill site. The Sustainable City Major Strategy seeks to reduce traffic congestion, pollution, wastefulness, and environmental degradation of our living environment. The amendment site is located within the central area of the City and within close proximity to existing bus transit. The Santa Clara/Alum Rock corridor is the location of the Downtown/East Valley Transit Improvement Plan where there is a planned and funded light rail line that will connect the East Valley to Downtown San Jose. Locating development in already urbanized areas and around transit contributes to sustainability by shortening trip lengths and providing for the availability of different modes of transportation such as public transit, biking, and walking. This in turn helps to conserve energy and improve air quality.

### **Environmental Issues**

The Housing Opportunity Study Phase II Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The EIR provides program level environmental review appropriate for the adoption of amendments to the San Jose 2020 General Plan. The EIR analyzed impacts and proposed mitigation measures, where possible, on the following items:

- land use
- air quality
- hazardous materials
- transportation
- noise
- geology and soils

- hydrology
- biology
- energy
- cultural resources
- utilities

The EIR identified two significant and unavoidable impacts including transportation and air quality for the HOS sites. An additional third significant and unavoidable noise impact was also identified for GP01-03-12.

The General Plan has many policies that can help mitigate the transportation and air quality impacts. However, should these sites develop prior to completion of the transit lines planned for the Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue and Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos Street TOD Corridors, the proposed land use changes would result in significant unavoidable long-term traffic impacts. Air Quality is considered a significant unavoidable impact because the project proposes additional residential units that are not reflected in the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) regional Clean Air Plan. The inclusion of identified mitigation measures would reduce the impacts on regional air quality, but because the proposed General Plan amendments would add population not already reflected in the regional Clean Air Plan, the air quality impacts of their approval would still be considered a significant impact.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The property owners within the amendment site boundaries and/or property owners within a 1000-foot radius of the amendment site were sent a newsletter regarding the three community meetings that were held on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> 2002. They also received a public hearing notice regarding the public hearings to be held on the subject amendment before the Planning Commission in May and City Council in June. In addition, the community can be kept informed about the status of amendments on the Department's web-site, which contains information on the General Plan process, each proposed amendment, staff reports, and hearing schedule.

During the community meetings, community members were concerned that there is already too much high density residential development in the area and that there are not adequate services such as parks and schools to support new residents.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Planning staff recommends Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC).

## Attachments

PBCE002/GP\_Team/2002Annual Review/Staff Reports/Spring Review/GP01-05-02.doc